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NAVAL VESSEL CONSTRUCTION IN COMMUNIST CHINA

I would like to present the current situation as we know it regarding naval vessel construction in Communist China. This will deal with types under construction, volume, and the facilities for constructing these vessels, and China's capability for producing components. It does not discuss the role of the junk.

1. The apparent decision to construct modern Soviet-model naval vessels in Communist China has changed the status-quo of naval strength in the Far East. This decision has resulted in delivery to the fleet of submarines, escort vessels, and smaller vessel types. These deliveries have significantly increased the strength of Chinese Communist naval forces.

2. Communist China has not had the industrial base to carry out this naval construction program by itself. Because of this fact, it has been necessary for the USSR to provide considerable amounts of technical assistance and material support. While the magnitude of this assistance is not known, it is believed to include the construction of shipbuilding facilities, the supply of components, the supply of technical personnel, and ship subassemblies, as well as training of skilled technicians.

3. In order to fully appreciate the results obtained by Communist China in naval ship construction, it is necessary to understand the role played by the USSR. The decision to undertake construction of Soviet model naval vessels of necessity had to occur considerably in advance of actual construction of the vessels because of the lack of shipbuilding facilities to support the construction program. The USSR evidently

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supported much of the facility development that did take place, including the Wuchang Shipyard and the installation at Hutung Shipyard. The Chinese now possess modern facilities designed for Soviet-type mass production techniques for the construction of submarines and for destroyer-types. When the actual construction began the USSR had a group of high caliber shipbuilding specialists in China to supervise, while at the same time Soviet industry was engaged in producing the necessary components and subassemblies. The indications are that initially most of the materials necessary were supplied by the USSR. This situation may be changed somewhat since it is possible that Chinese industry can now supply some of the material requirements. There are a few indications that the USSR is engaged in reducing Chinese dependence upon the USSR for components by assisting in the development of a naval component industry. None of the activities are unusually significant taken singly, but together represent an action on the part of the USSR which is already having significant impact, militarily and politically, in the Far East.

4. As of the first of this year, at least 15,000 tons, light ship weight (16,000 SDT), of Soviet-model naval vessels have been built in Communist China, while the construction of small patrol craft amount to an additional 9,000 tons (9700 SDT). It is estimated that the value of this total output between 1950-56 amounts to approximately 200 million US 1955 dollars.

Communist China has produced over 200 naval vessels in the period since 1950. As to type, these vessels include W-class submarines, Riga class escort vessels, Kronstadt subchasers, T-43 minesweepers, P-6 torpedo boats, and small patrol craft.

Approved For Release 2003/08/08 : CIA-RDP61S00137A000100110062-0

The Chinese are emphasizing the W-class long range submarine in their ship construction program. Chiang-nan Shipyard in Shanghai has been building W-class submarines since 1955 and construction of this class of submarine is believed to have commenced at Wuchang Shipyard on the Yangtze. There are 4 inclined building ways at Chiang-nan being utilized in this production. The first series of four vessels required approximately 16-18 months to complete, which is considerably longer than the 3-12 months required to construct this class of submarine in the USSR. Wuchang is believed to have, or will have under construction by the end of 1957, four submarines. A second series of 4 submarines is currently on the ways at Chiang-nan, and there are indications that a third series of 4 submarines will be built. It is thought that with the completion of the 12 submarines, submarine construction will be transferred from Chiang-nan to Wuchang and that all subsequent submarine construction will take place at Wuchang.

The largest surface naval vessel included in the naval ship construction program is the Riga class escort vessel. The Chinese are building this class in the Hutung Shipyard in Shanghai, in a new installation patterned after modern Soviet shipbuilding installations. The Riga program appears to be moving slowly as indicated by only a partial utilization of the new installation and by the small number of vessels involved in relation to the submarine program. While the program appears to be moving slowly, the construction time of about 9 months approximates the Soviet building time for this vessel class. It is believed that this rate of construction has been attained through the use of the new installation which permits the assembly of large subsections. The facility consists of three horizontal building ways, each of which will permit the simultaneous construction of

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two Riga class vessels. The launching ramp is designed to provide controlled side-launching. Since 1955, when the first vessel was laid down, four and possibly five Riga's have been launched and an additional two vessels are believed under construction.

The smaller Soviet model naval types being built in China include the Kronstadt class subchaser, the T-43 minesweeper and the P-6 torpedo boat. These smaller naval vessels are being built at more limited shipyards in

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Of the Kronstadt subchasers it is estimated that 21 have been completed in China, 13 in Shanghai at the Kiosusin Shipyard and 8 at Whampoa Naval Dockyard. Minesweeper production is most difficult to estimate; however 3 vessels are considered plausible. It is considered likely that torpedo boat construction is confined to Shanghai and Canton at this time. The small patrol craft built in Chinese shipyards since 1950 are not considered to be of Soviet-design. About 200 of these vessels have been built; however, construction has been considerably curtailed with the introduction of the Soviet model naval vessels.

This raises the question of the degree of integration between Soviet and Chinese naval forces, if any, for logistics, training of personnel, development of naval bases and command.

A further question is the extent to which the USSR will permit the Chinese to become completely independent of the USSR in naval vessels or in naval components.

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